

Testimony
March 5, 2009

Senator Handley, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee, my name is Mariela Agosto, and I'm a post doc fellow at the Pat and Jim Calhoun Cardiology Center, working with Dr. Liang, the chief of cardiology. I am here today to speak in support of **HB 6335, An Act Concerning the UCHC Facilities Plan.**

In this day and age when we are experiencing great advances in medicine like never before, UCHC cannot afford to be anything short of being state-of-the art. This must be the case in order to provide excellent care to many people that depend on our knowledge and expertise to live long healthy lives. In this regard, the idea of expansion and modernization is timely and prudent. The HB6335 act proposes the creation of a "University Hospital" with two campuses made up of a new and improved John Dempsey Hospital and a renovated Hartford Hospital. Importantly, this plan will promote excellence in medical and dental education, help recruit and retain additional research & clinical faculty and also will transform the Dempsey Hospital from 2nd smallest academic hospital to one of the largest with over 1000 beds. This merger will not only improve the quality and scope of care we are able to provide, but also create jobs and enhance investments in biomedical technology, a move which we can all agree will be very welcome in this time of economic recession. And it will cost the state considerably less than continuing to operate the JDH independently.

Now grant me a few minutes to talk about my background, and experiences with the Health Center. I obtained my Bachelor's degree in Biology at the University of Puerto Rico, and then enrolled in medical school at University of Guadalajara, Mexico. I continued my medical education with one year of supervised clinical training in St. Vincent Medical Center at Bridgeport. This year exposed me to the rigors and intricacies of the US healthcare system, I obtained hands-on experience with medical technology and equipment and more than ever, I became acutely aware of my tremendous enjoyment of systematically applying my knowledge to solve medical problems. But before getting into my internship I decided to do clinical research because medicine is based on research, and the clinical knowledge we have is the result of developments and discoveries made by scientists in the lab, and then translated to patient. This "bench to bedside" approach is key to superior medical practice. Currently in Dr. Liang's lab we are working on a new biomarker in patients with Heart Failure. To give you a brief overview of what we do we recruit patients with congestive heart failure and myocardial infarction (or heart attack), who either present at our ER or are admitted at the JDH. After informed consent is obtained from all patients they undergo, blood samples are obtained, brought to the research laboratory within minutes and processed for sophisticated immunoassay measurement of a peptide, which is an exciting new marker for heart failure and heart attack, I believe. This new test not only will diagnose heart disease but may also identify patients at the earliest possible time before they develop acute heart failure. If we are able to confirm this, we will save and improve quality of lives, and save money as well.

We are also involved in looking at developing new methods and agents to rescue the already failed heart. So really we are looking at the problem from both ends, before and after it happen. This is exciting stuff!

Integrated with research, I've had the chance to participate in cardiology case presentation and discussion two to three times a week, an endeavor that has greatly enriched my clinical knowledge of cardiac conditions, and the management of patients with a variety of cardiac complications. In summary, my experience has been very enriching and rewarding. I believe that the proposed merger will allow more students to have even better educational experiences, and become excellent physicians and scientists that we all need. Thank you.